

City of North Saint Paul
May 5, 2020
Adopted City Council Workshop Meeting Minutes

The May 5, 2020 meeting was held via Zoom and complied with all requirements of Minnesota State Statute 13D.021.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Furlong called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Present: Council Member Scott Thorsen
Council Member Candy Petersen
Council Member Jan Walczak
Council Member Tom Sonnek
Mayor Terry Furlong

Staff: City Manager Scott Duddeck, Deputy Clerk Mary Mills, City Attorney Soren Mattick, City Engineer Morgan Dawley, Electric Director Brian Frandle, Police Chief Tom Lauth, Fire Chief Jason Mallinger, Public Works Director Nick Fleischhacker, Public Works Superintendent Ron Ritchie, Finance Director Jason Zimmerman, Community and Administrative Services Director Debra Gustafson.

Guests: Kari Erpenbach, contract communications

III. TOPIC(S)

A. Operational Updates.

City Manager Duddeck reviewed the current status of staffing. Public Works and Electric Crews are back full staff but with staggered hours and are paired with workers to stay in compliance with social distancing regulations. There are no changes at City Hall at this time.

Playground equipment in the parks was discussed at length. Although parks are not closed to the general public, nor is park use discouraged, there are no building/shelter rentals scheduled through May, and all playground equipment is signed as closed and taped off due to the COVID. Social distancing must remain in place at this time. The City does not have the staff or resources to keep playground equipment sanitized continuously at this time. Restrooms are open and cleaned daily at Casey Lake Park.

Council Member Thorsen stated that he does not believe it is necessary for the City to comply with the State's "emergency declaration" and stay-at-home order. He added things have progressed and changed. He noted there is no logical explanation for the decisions coming from the State, and certain businesses should be allowed to be open. City Attorney Mattick noted that the declaration provides two key authorities: it allows for future reimbursement of expenses incurred by the city during the pandemic, and it is meant to follow State Emergency directives and allow the city to expedite changes that otherwise would not be allowed. It cuts the red tape in an emergency to allow for split second decisions. In addition, the City of North St. Paul is a Plan

B government and the City Manager has the explicit right to make decisions that affect the management of the City. Council Member Sonnek added that what kind of precedent are we setting if we relax the regulations still in place by the State. Are we promoting unsafe use of the equipment. Minnesota is not ready to go to Phase I. Mayor Furlong indicated that the City Manager is tune with the current situation, having daily and weekly conversations with the County and surrounding cities.

Mr. Duddeck introduced Kari Erpenbach. Kari is working with Laurie Koehnle on revising the website and improving the City's communication efforts in all areas. Laurie is retiring in July and they are working diligently to complete this process before then. They are doing a thorough site review, using Google analytics and Google search methods, reworking content and identifying branding. It is City Manager Duddeck's hope that once this is complete other cities will look to North St. Paul as the example to follow.

City Manager Duddeck noted a special meeting to approve the project and agreements for Uptown Commons is being scheduled for next week.

Council Member Thorsen requested that the council meetings be moved back to City Hall, perhaps in the Training Room. Council Member Sonnek stated that holding our meetings remotely holds no risk for council, staff or the public, but meeting at city hall does. Mayor Furlong indicated that for now the meetings will remain being held via Zoom.

Council Member Sonnek inquired about the right-of-way policy for broken water lines and where the city responsibility begins/ends and the homeowner responsibility begins/ends. Mr. Dawley indicated that the City ordinance should be reviewed as it does not follow what the current recommended practice is. Staff will review this ordinance.

B. Traffic Signal and construction at 7th Avenue and Margaret Street.

City Engineer Morgan Dawley gave an update related to the traffic signal at Margaret Street and 7th Avenue, to include cost estimates, traffic studies completed, recommendations with the upcoming project.

Also reviewed was the concrete roadway pavement versus asphalt roadway pavement. The pros and cons, overall lifecycle of each, cost comparison and installation construction impacts.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

V. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion by Council Member Sonnek, seconded by Council Member Walczak, with all present voting aye (5-0), Mayor Furlong adjourned the workshop meeting at 6:10 p.m.

/s/ Terrence J. Furlong, Mayor

Attest:

/s/ Scott A. Duddeck, City Manager/Clerk